

Tips for a First Class, First Class! Building a Foundation for a Successful Course

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Google Slides:

tinyurl.com/UCCSTLC24

Track 0: Deep Thoughts & Social Banter

1. YouTube or Netflix?
2. Burger or pizza?
3. Money or free time?
4. Beach or mountains?
5. Coffee or tea?
6. Cars or trucks?
7. Night owl or early bird?
8. Macs or PCs?
9. Dogs or cats?
10. Books or movies?



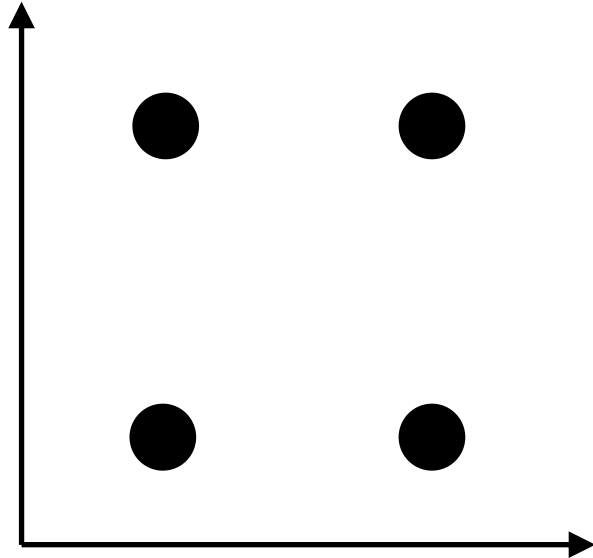
Playlist

Track	Title	~ Time
0	Deep thoughts and social banter	-5 minutes
1	Four dot icebreaker activity and/or Meet me in 5	10-20 minutes
2	8 “first class” considerations	20+ minutes
3	So what, now what?: Discussion and resource sharing	Remaining
4	Bonus Track - Warm vs. cold syllabus language	

Track 1a: Four Dot Icebreaker Activity



The Tools...



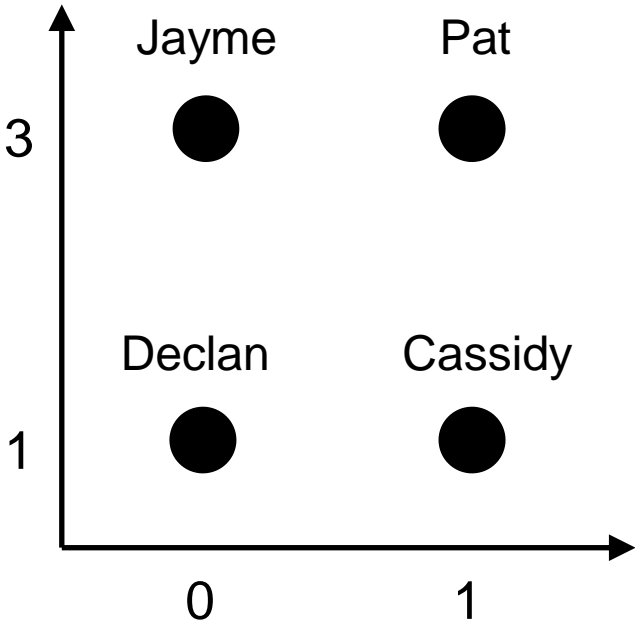
The Rules...

1. Each person writes their name next to one dot
2. Groups define the axes
 - no physical attributes!
 - x/y scales are malleable
1. 6 minutes to complete

Source: <https://blog.mrmeyer.com/2013/personality-coordinates-icebreaker/>

Sample Solution

of US states lived in during lifetime



of Steelers jerseys owned

The Rules...



1. Each person writes their name next to one dot
2. Groups define the axes
 - no physical attributes!
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1. 6 minutes to complete

Track 1b: Meet me in 5



Professional title(s) and
department/unit at UCCS

UCCS employment
start year

Name

City, State
where you were born

A. Best 2024 winter
break activity **OR**

B. Dealer's Choice

Professor and chair
Teaching and Learning

2010

Pat

Latrobe, PA

San Diego/Legoland
with the fam

Track 2: Eight “first class” considerations and tips



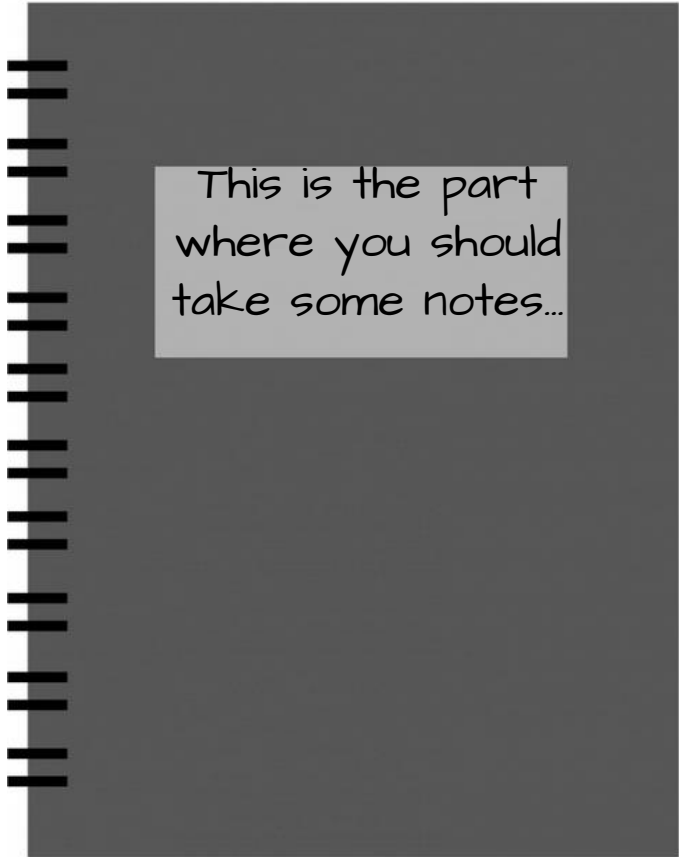
**Carnegie
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Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation

[Making the Most of the First Day of Class](#)

8 First Class Considerations



This is the part
where you should
take some notes...

1. Orchestrate positive first impressions
2. Introduce yourself effectively
3. Clarify learning objectives and expectations
4. Help students learn about each other
5. Set the tone for the course
6. Collect baseline data on students' knowledge and motivation
7. Whet students' appetite for the content
8. Inform students of course requirements

1. Positive First Impressions

What I Do?

In-Person

- Arrive early and greet students
- Set up a welcoming environment (including desks, materials, etc).
- Post the playlist as students enter

Online

- Send [syllabus](#) early and include a friendly [welcome letter](#)
- Post announcement in Canvas (normally 1-2 weeks in advance)
- Clear syllabus with “warm” language
 - More on this in [bonus track](#)

2. Introduce yourself effectively

What I Do?

In-Person

- 1 slide about me (short and sweet!)
- Share some basics, maybe 1-2 deep things.
- Establish credibility while checking my ego

Online

- [“Getting to know you”](#) discussion board
 - Students choose any 5
 - I participate as well
- Also include brief intro in course welcome letter and announcement

3. Clarify Objectives & Expectations

What I Do?

In-Person

- Accomplished in [syllabus](#)
- [Syllabus scavenger hunt](#) (slide 9)
 - ~2 mins! Don't belabor this...
- Expectations = What I want students to "be" vs. what they shouldn't do

Online

- [Syllabus](#)
- [Welcome letter](#)
- Also sprinkle in during early course announcements

4. Help Students Learn About Each Other

What I Do?

In-Person

- [4-dot icebreaker](#) (see slides 7-8)
 - Small courses, need groups of 4
- [Meet me in 5](#) (see slides 4-6)
 - Small to medium size courses
- [Four corners](#) (see slide 6)
 - (med-large courses)

Online

- Required week 1 “[getting to know you](#)” discussion board
 - Students choose any 5
 - I fully participate
- Also sprinkle in opportunities during early modules to revisit

5. Setting the Tone for the Course

What I Do?

In-Person

- Establish a positive culture!!!
- Share the what and why for the course
- Model active learning, limit lecture

[See slides for first day of course](#)

Online

- Establish a positive culture!!!
- Share the what and why for the course
- Model active learning, limit lecture

6. Collect Baseline Data

What I Do?

In-Person

- [Course intro survey](#)
- 5-10 mins tops!
- Completed within first week
- Share compiled results with students

Online

- [Course intro survey](#)
- 5-10 mins tops!
- Completed within first week
- Share compiled results with students

7. Whet Students Appetite

What I Do?

In-Person

- Limit direct instruction
- Scenarios, discussions, videos
- Voice and choice!

Online

- Limit direct instruction
- Scenarios, discussions, videos
- Voice and choice!

8. Review Logistics

What I Do?

In-Person

- [Playlists](#) (see slide 2)
 - (first 2ish mins of class)
- [Checklists](#) (see slide 26)
 - (last 5ish mins of class)

Online

- Weekly Canvas announcements
 - check-ins & updates
- Communication is key!

Track 3: So What, Now What?





Discussion Prompts:

1. One thing I learned about today was...
1. One thing I want to try/do in a future course is...
1. **Optional:** One resource I could share with others is...

Bonus Track!

Syllabus Language



Warm vs. cold language

Harnish, R. J., & Bridges, K. R. (2011). [Effect of syllabus tone: Students' perceptions of instructor and course.](#) *Social Psychology of Education*, 14(3), 319-330.

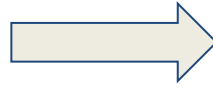
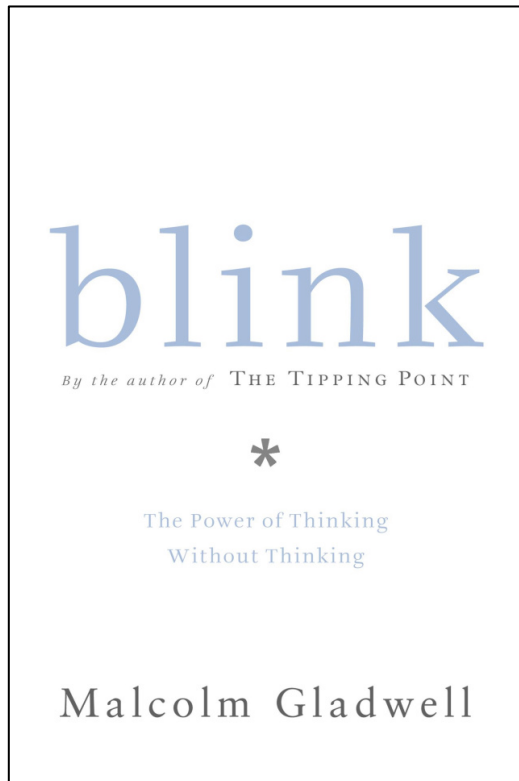


Table 1 on pgs. 5-6 is the most useful!

First Impressions Matter!



- Ambady, N., & Rosenthal, R. (1993). Half a minute: Predicting teacher evaluations from thin slices of nonverbal behavior and physical attractiveness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 64(3), 431.
- Buchert, S., Laws, E. L., Apperson, J. M., & Bregman, N. J. (2008). First impressions and professor reputation: Influence on student evaluations of instruction. *Social Psychology of Education*, 11(4), 397-408.
- Flokstra, B. R., & Hill, S. E. (2020). Rock the First Day! In *Chemistry Student Success: A Field-Tested, Evidence-Based Guide* (pp. 203-212). American Chemical Society.

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